

checkup

BVMI
Bergen Volunteer Medical Initiative

DOING MORE FOR MORE PEOPLE

Listening, Healing... Body & Mind

The good news? *Healing is possible.*

We recently sat down with BVMI's mental health experts. They candidly revealed the emotional toll that the COVID-19 pandemic has taken on our patients, and the techniques the team is using to help them. When it comes to emotional wellness, they all agree that "it's complicated." No two patients' needs are exactly the same.





DEAR FRIEND

The impact of COVID-19 on our collective health has been traumatic. Who would have dreamed we'd see something like this during our lifetime? There are many scars to heal—physical and emotional. Still, as more people get vaccinated, return to work, and even hug again, we can see a road to recovery.

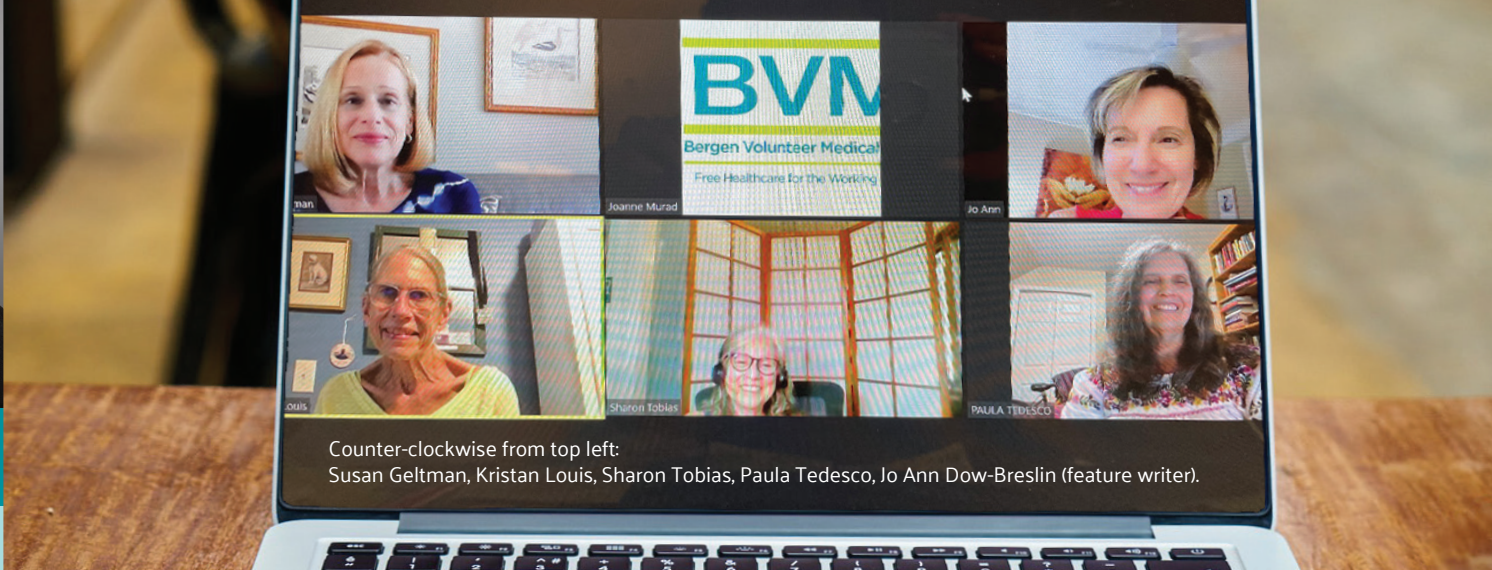
BVMI's clinic doors have reopened. And with our telehealth efforts now a permanent part of the mix, patients have more flexibility in how and when they receive care. We're doing more than ever, because you stepped up to help in so many ways. Thank you!

The caring, day-to-day efforts of our entire healthcare team throughout the pandemic have been incredible. This issue of our newsletter highlights the work of our mental health professionals. Their strength and expertise helped our patients come out of some very dark places, and find hope to move ahead.

Over these last few months, we've lost some dear friends at BVMI—people like Gene Marsh, a longtime volunteer, and Earl Wheaton, MD, one of the founders of BVMI. And Ellen Fitzpatrick, the creative force behind the design of our publications for so many years, has also left us too soon. We dedicate this issue to her memory, knowing she'd have "just a few more tweaks..."

Amanda

Amanda Missey, President/CEO
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To Heal Minds, Listen. *Carefully.*

These days, mental health has moved up several notches on the worry list for most BVMI patients. We count on our volunteer mental health professionals to assess what patients need to stay in their best possible frame of mind. Approaches range from talk therapy to medication...and lots of careful listening.

“ BVMI patients had it hard before the pandemic; imagine what it's like for them now. They're worried about family members, jobs lost and basic resources. They can be depressed. I help with coping techniques, and then make referrals for other needs.

– **Paula Tedesco, Advanced Practice Nurse (APN)**

“ I treated a young man from El Salvador who suffered from anxiety. While he benefited from therapy, I sensed there was something more going on. During the next phone session, as he walked home from his job, I asked about his childhood. He sat down under a tree and started to cry, opening up. He'd never thought about how his early experiences were tied to the issues he was having today. I was so moved. Now when I think, 'What can I really do, single-handedly, to help anyone,' I remember moments like this.

– **Sharon Tobias, PhD**

*Every
breakthrough
is a gift!*

“ The pandemic was a trigger for many cases of PTSD. One of my patients thought he was hearing voices, which turned out to be flashbacks...to his respirator beeping when he was hospitalized with COVID. Two weeks after discharge he was back at the hospital, thinking he'd had a heart attack...but it was a panic attack. After several months of therapy and medication he was thankful to be free of flashbacks and panic attacks.

– **Kristan Louis, APN**

“ Most of what I do as a volunteer psychotherapist is 'talk therapy.' I try to figure out a patient's main concerns, then offer strategies for how he or she can use inner strengths and problem-solving abilities. This is why a good language interpreter is critical, especially when I try to determine if a patient is having suicidal thoughts. It's a hard question to ask.

– **Susan Geltman, LCSW, LCADC**



Susan offered a coping tip to help us all get through the pandemic. "Try to keep a gratitude list," she said. "Each day, add something or someone you're grateful for. It's a good fallback position on days when the going gets tough."

A Forever Friend: GENE MARSH

Sometimes you lose count of just how many lives someone has touched. That's how it is for BVMI as we remember Gene Marsh, our dear friend and supporter who passed away in March.

Gene was a personal friend of BVMI founder Dr. Sam Cassell, and shared his sense of social responsibility. He became involved in BVMI early on, serving on the board and helping to build out our first clinic. Gene and his wife Lynda were also generous donors, joining our Legacy Society to help secure BVMI's future.

Gene carried on a legacy of mentorship, philanthropy and volunteerism taught to him by his father-in-law. "He was a warm, inclusive person, whose life was enriched by people he met along the way. He always tried to make a genuine connection," said his daughter, Lisa Marsh. BVMI brought all that together.

"Dad often talked about individuals he'd helped – not to boast, but to share his positive feelings and promote those qualities in us," said Gene's son Lawrence. "I think that working on BVMI helped him feel better about the world, knowing he was doing some good."

Gene never had time on his hands once he retired. He was continually learning and passing on his knowledge to others. He helped found the Bicycle Touring Club of North Jersey, and taught English as a Second Language to immigrants. For more than 15 years, Gene was a proud member of the "Greyheads," a crew of older volunteers at Bergen County's Habitat for Humanity.

We appreciate all Gene did for BVMI and those we serve. One of his final acts of generosity will now become known as the Gene Marsh Patient Emergency Fund, providing assistance with rent and other needs. Goodness always finds a way to live on.



2021 events!

BVMI GOLF OUTING

On July 26, the inaugural BVMI Golf Classic was held at Arcola Country Club. Ninety golfers joined us for a great day of golf; proceeds will be used to support BVMI's mission of providing free healthcare for the uninsured. Thank you to all who supported this event! Special thanks to event chair Terry Hensle, MD, for his leadership!

12TH ANNIVERSARY GALA

Honoring Becton, Dickinson and Company (BD)
Thursday, September 23, 6:30pm

Please join us as we honor BD and celebrate BVMI's 12th Anniversary.

Register today at bvmi.org/gala



FOR MORE INFORMATION

on upcoming events, contact Barbara Loscalzo,
BVMI Special Events Manager, at barbara@bvmi.net

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MISSION

Powered by passionate volunteers, BVMI meets the medical needs of low-income, working, uninsured adults in Bergen County by providing free, comprehensive, patient-centered primary healthcare.



**VOLUNTEERS
IN MEDICINE®
AMERICA**



BVMI

Bergen Volunteer Medical Initiative

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THANK YOU

FOR PROVIDING HELP AND HOPE TO OUR BERGEN COUNTY NEIGHBORS

Still Giving, Still Caring

"I need to be busy." Norma Gindes lives up to this statement every day. That energy propelled BMVI early on, when Norma was BMVI's first executive director.

"BMVI was one of the most rewarding places I ever worked," said Norma. "What they do speaks to my values, so I continue to make annual donations to them. This year, my husband and I decided to join BMVI's Legacy Society. Legacy gifts are one of the ways that your children can witness what you think is important in life. They're also key to a nonprofit's sustainability. Traditional grants are always needed, but they can have a limited life span. Legacy gifts can benefit future generations."

Norma is now well rooted in North Carolina. She's surrounded by family, including her five grandchildren. "When we moved here, people welcomed us right away," she said. "There's a sense of social action and social justice in our area. That's important to us. I've joined a social action committee



Norma and Robert Gindes with their grandchildren.

at my synagogue that works with congregations of various faiths. We help people in many ways, be it a local food drive or sponsoring a newly immigrated family."

Her need to remain busy is certainly being met. "You stay young and alert when you're stimulated and around other people," Norma said. "I learned that from my board members at BMVI. The organization keeps moving forward to serve its patients in new ways. And donors can clearly understand the impact they'll make."

Thanks for continuing to believe in us, Norma. Coming from you, it means a lot.

REMEMBERING EARL WHEATON



In March, BMVI lost a good friend when Dr. Earl Wheaton passed away. "Dr. Wheaton was a 'man for all seasons' – scholar, athlete, humorist, extremely well read, superb medical judgment, a stable port in the storm of life, a gentleman and just plain fun to be with," said Art De Simone, MD, BMVI's medical director and long-time friend and colleague. "He was a vigorous supporter of Sam Cassell when they began BMVI. He will be missed and never forgotten by those who knew him."

(L to R) Janet Finke, Carol Cassell, Susanna Kopchains, Earl Wheaton

THANK YOU!

THANK YOU FOR YOUR GENEROSITY AND YOUR COMMITMENT TO BVMI!

BVMI gratefully acknowledges donors who made contributions February 1 - June 30, 2021

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